

CONCURRENCIES

*Charlotte Salomon and Eva Hesse:
Genius, Trauma and Creative Imagination*

Debra Disman



This publication was created in conjunction with
Debra Disman: I Can't I Won't I Will I Do
exhibition at ReflectSpace gallery at
Glendale Central Library,
January 28 – March 19, 2023,
co-curated by Ara and Anahid Oshagan.

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Glendale
Library
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Culture

The images in this artist book were collected and paired by Debra Disman to connect and contrast the lives and works of the two artists.

Left-hand pages:
Charlotte Salomon

Right-hand pages:
Eva Hesse

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*Charlotte Salomon and Eva Hesse: Genius,
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I was honored to receive a 2021-22 Artist Project Fellowship from the City of Santa Monica to investigate, compare and link the lives and the groundbreaking work of Jewish women artists Charlotte Salomon and Eva Hesse. My research was based on their shared experience of trauma and loss through the Jewish Holocaust, their remarkably similar family traumas (both lost their mothers to suicide as children), and most centrally, their invention of new forms of visual art through which I posit they attempt to cope with these traumas.

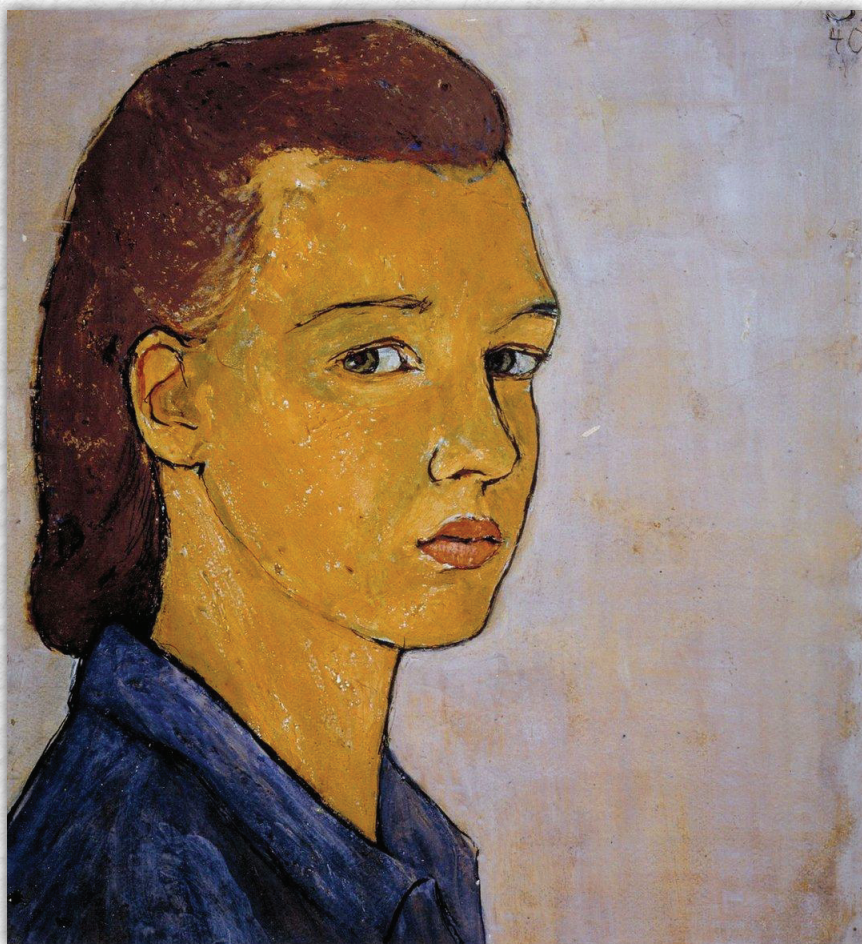
In addition to their early deaths, each had a powerful emotional involvement with a charismatic male-identifying artist who proved to be influential, even pivotal in the development of their work and artistic breakthroughs.

The project revolves around several themes: being a woman-identified artist, being a Jewish women artist, being an artist during a profoundly turbulent time in history, incalculable family loss, the relationship between internal and external turbulence and the creative act, and the transformative power of the creative process. Charlotte and Eva show us how to celebrate the triumph of the imagination above and beyond the triumph of the will.

On a broader scale, the project examines ways in which the creative process can transform and potentially transcend traumatic experience, and how trauma can, however painfully, elicit the creation of new, generative artistic forms, processes, media and voices. Through these two geniuses, separated by a single generation and united by personal and historical circumstances, we can see how the creative imagination can continue to reverberate throughout time, influencing and inspiring new generations of creators.

Sourced over years of research into Charlotte and Eva, this artist book has allowed me the opportunity to expand, deepen, formalize and concretize my ongoing exploration of their lives and work through collected and paired images. It has enabled me to offer a view into the extraordinary creative means by which they responded to overwhelming historical, political, familial and psychological trauma, as well as the ways these traumas and their artistic responses are concurrent and intertwined.

--Debra Disman































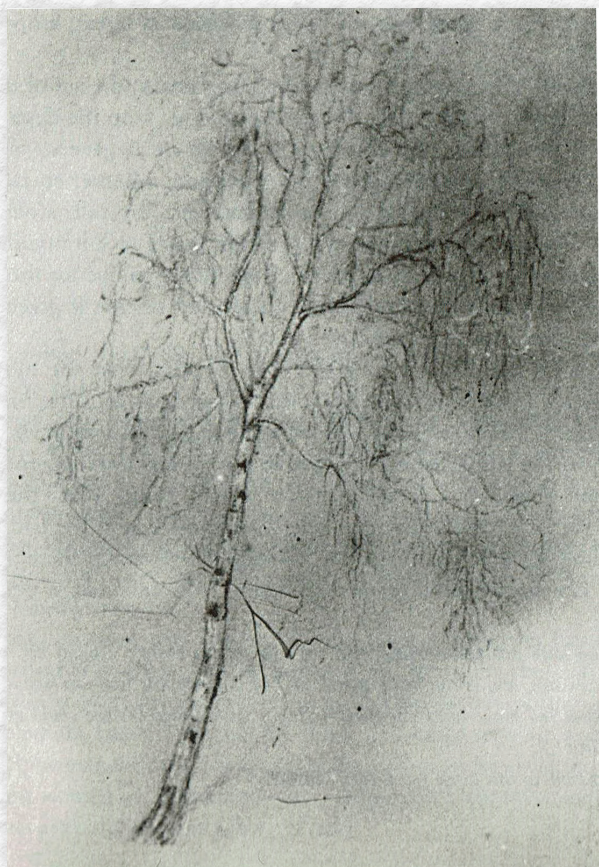










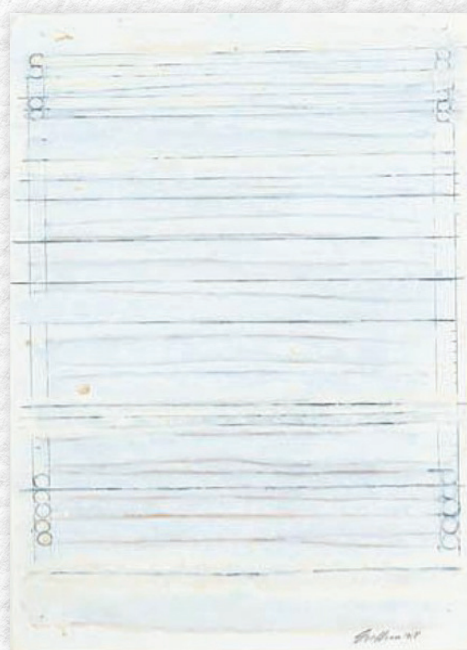


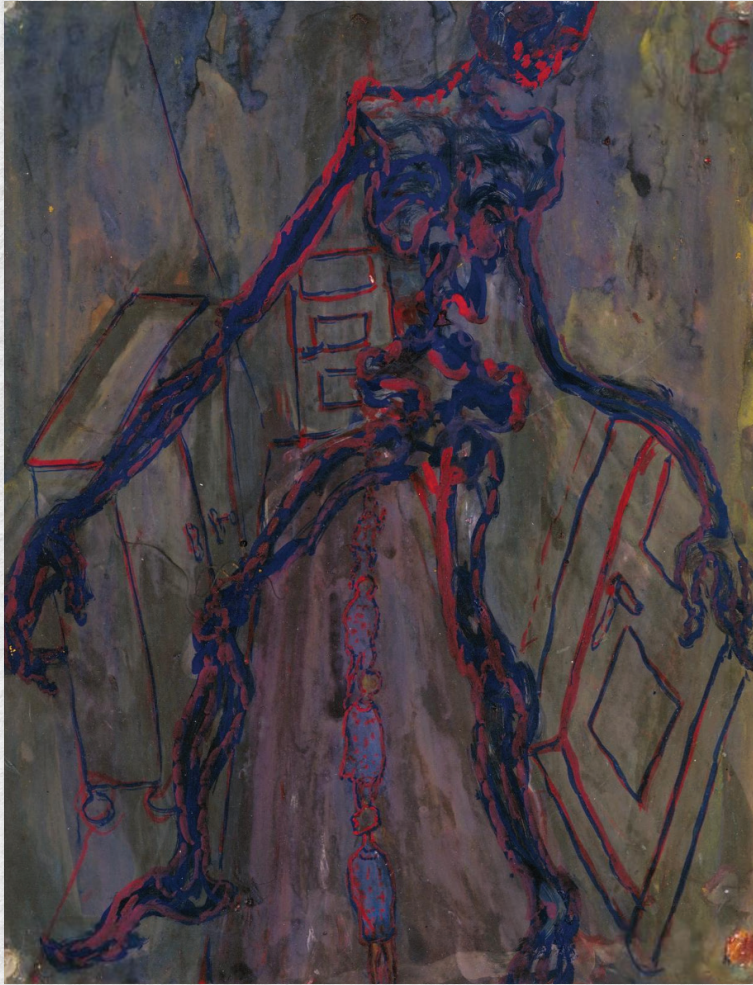


ZWEI DINGE. ERSTEN
DASS DER DABER LOHN!
BLICK ZUSAGEN SCHLIEßEN
DER TOD UND DAS MÄDCHEN
— DAS SIND WIR BEIDE
UND ZWEITENS DASS
DIE IHN IMMER NOCH
GENAU SOLIEBTE WIE
VORHER — UND WENN
ER DER TOD WER — DAN
WAR DAS ALLES GUT
DANN BRAUCHTE SIE
SICH NICHT — WIE
IHRE VORFAHREN — UM
ZUBRINGEN — DEN
NACH SEINER ME-
THODE KONNTE MAN
JA AUFERSTEHEN
SOLLTE JA SOGAR UM
DAS LEBEN NOCH
MEHR ZULIEBEN — EI-
MAL GESTORBEN
SEIN — SO WAR SIE
JA EIGENTLICH
DAS LEBENDE
MODELL FÜR SEI-
NE THEORIEN —
UND SIE ERINNERTE

PASSIERT SOGAR - DASS
ALLE DARZUSTELLENDEN PER-
SONEN EINEN VERSCHIEDENEN
TEXT ZU SINGEN HABEN, WO-
MIT EIN CHOR GESANG ENT-
STEHT. DIE VERSCHIEDEN-
HEIT DER BLÄTTER SOLLTE WENI-
GER AM VERFASSER LIEGEN - ALS
AN DER VERSCHIEDENHEIT DER
CHARAKTHERE DER ZUGEBIL-
DET WERDENDEN PERSONEN. DER
VERFASSER BEMUHT SICH - WIE
AM DEUTLICHSTEN VIELLEICHT IM HAU-
PTTEIL ZU SPÜREN IST - VOLLSTÄNDIG
AUS SICH SELBST HERAUSZUGEHEN
UND DIE PERSONEN MITEIGENER STIMME
SINGEN ODER SRECHEN ZU LASSEN
UM DAS ZU ERREICHEN - WURDE
AUF VIEL KÜNSTLERISCHES VERZICHT
ET WAS MAN JEDOCH - SO ICH-
NACH IN HINSICHT DER SEELENHILF-
DRÄNGERISCH GELEISTETEN
ARBEIT - VERZEIHEN
WIRD.

DER VERFASSER
ST. JEAN AUGUST 1940/
ODER ZWISCHEN HIMMEL
WURDE AUSSERHALB 41
VON UNSERER ZEIT IM JAHR
DES
NEUEN THEILES



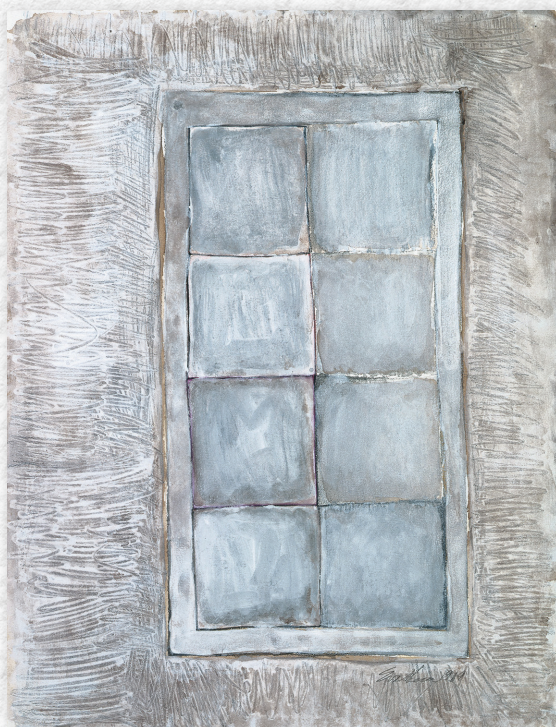


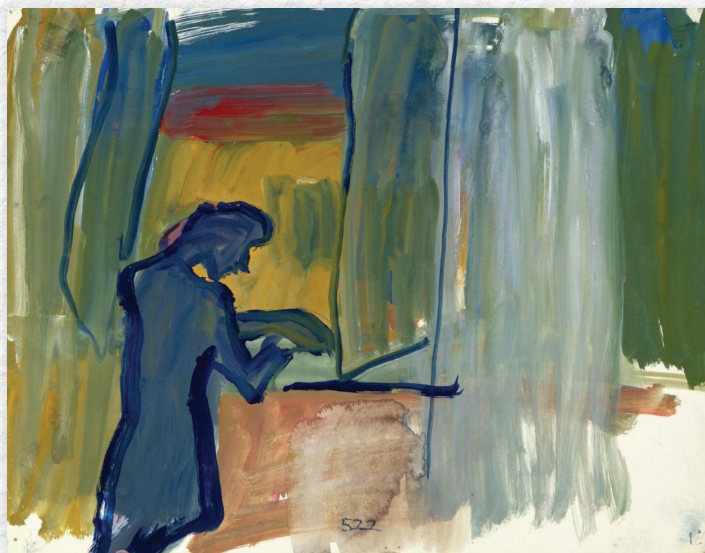






















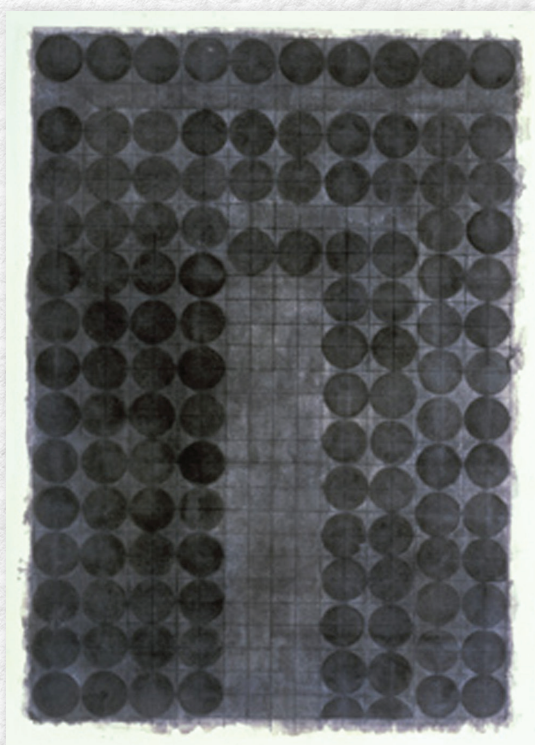


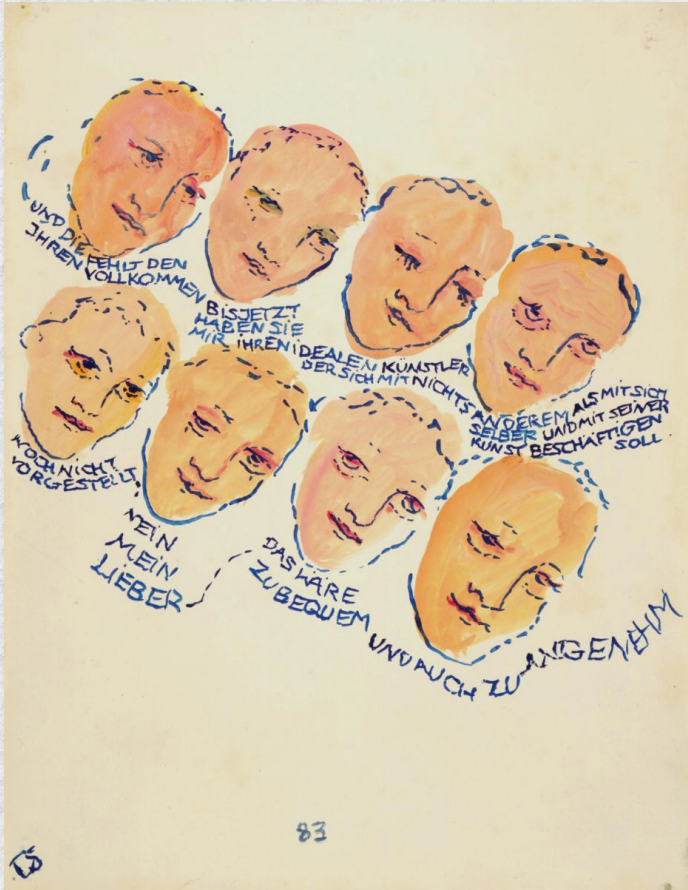


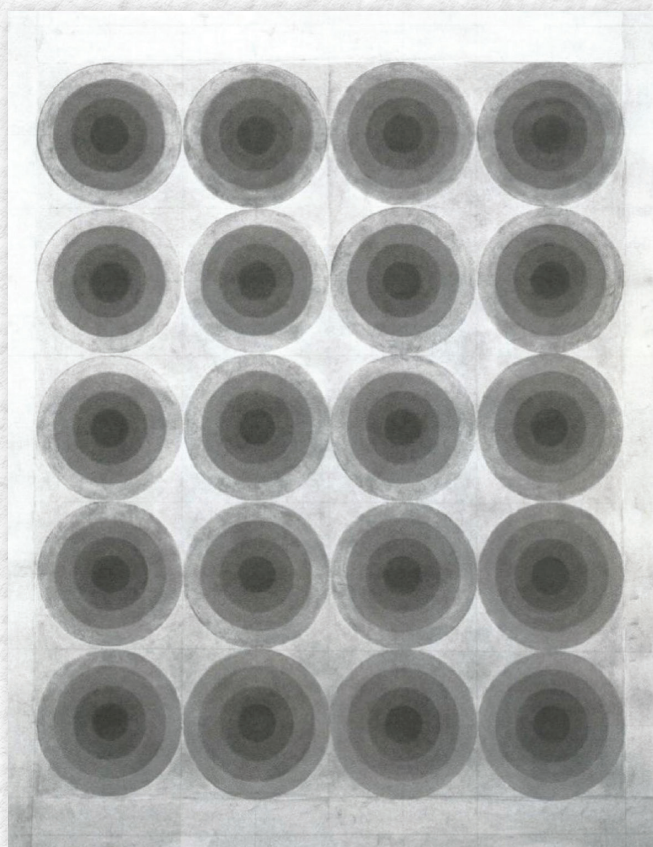




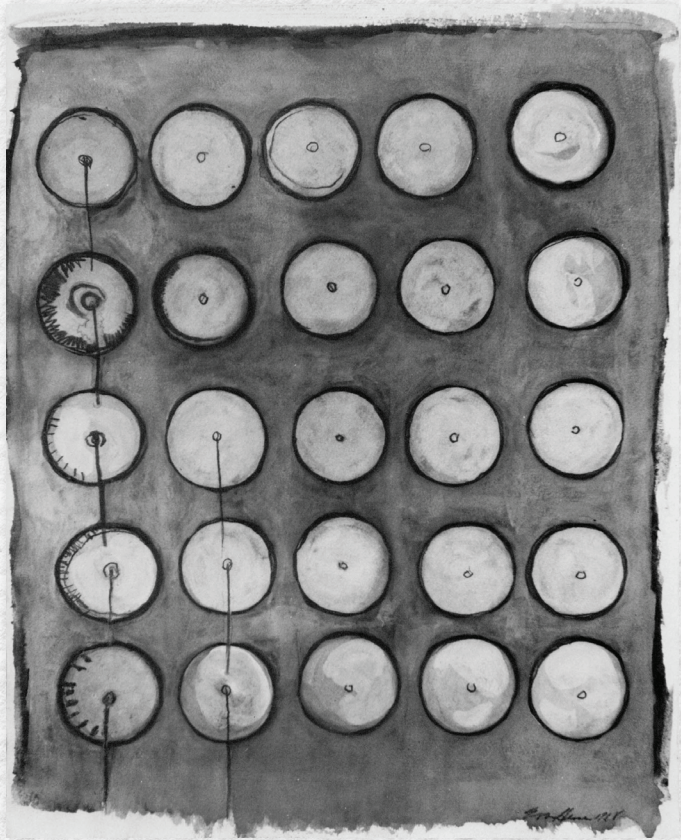


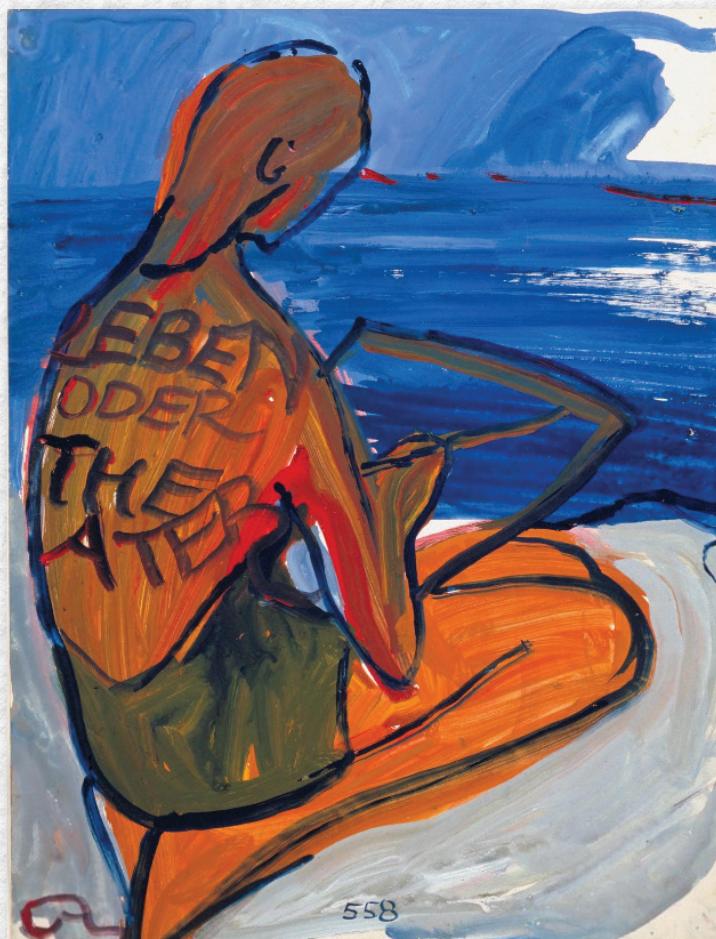














CAPTIONS AND INFORMATION FOR IMAGES

1a.

Charlotte Salomon, Self-portrait, c. 1940
Gouache on cardboard, 53.9 x 39 cm
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

1b.

Portrait of Eva Hesse c.1960
Photo by Stephen Korbet

2a.

Charlotte Salomon, School picture, 1932
Photo by Igna Beth Heiden
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

2b.

Eva Hesse in her home/studio at 134 Bowery,
New York, c. 1968
Photo by Herman Landshoff
Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth Gallery

3a.

Charlotte Salomon in the garden of L'Hermitage,
Villefranche, France 1939-40
Collection Jewish Historical Museum,
Amsterdam and Charlotte Salomon Foundation

3b.

Eva Hesse in her studio, 1965
Photo by Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse and
Hauser & Wirth Gallery

4a.

Charlotte Salomon about the age of
twenty in Nice, France. c. 1938
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

4b.

Eva Hesse in her Bowery Studio, circa 1967
Photo by Herman Landshoff, Courtesy of the Estate of
Eva Hesse and Hauser & Wirth Gallery

5a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004808
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

5b.

Eva Hesse, No title, 1960
Oil on canvas, 18 x 15"
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Charash

6a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004907
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

6b.

Eva Hesse, Untitled, 1960
Oil on canvas, 36x36"
Ursula Hauser collection, Switzerland

7a.

Alfred Wolfsohn in Berlin, 1932
(Possible Charlotte Salomon's partner-lover)
Unknown photographer
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

7b.

Tom Doyle in his studio at Kettwig, c. 1965
(Eva Hesse's then husband)
Unknown photographer
Allen Memorial Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio

8a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004670
(Charlotte and Daberlohn in a park)
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

8b.

Eva Hesse, No title, 1960
Oil on canvas, 49 1/4 x 49 1/2"
Ursula Hauser collection, Switzerland

9a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004701
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

9b.

Eva Hesse, No title, 1960
Oil on Masonite. 15 3/4 x 12"
Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse and
Hauser & Wirth Gallery

10a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004817
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

10b.

Eva Hesse, "Untitled", 1960
Oil on canvas, 26 x 26"
Courtes of MOMA, NY

11a.

Photo of a lost drawing of a birch tree by Charlotte
Salomon, before 1939
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

11b.

Eva Hesse, No Title, 1960-61
Gouache, ink and graphite on paper, 12 x 9"
Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse and
Hauser & Wirth Gallery

12a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004924
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

12b.

Mel Bochner, Portrait of Eva Hesse, 1966
Pen and ink on graph paper, 7.5 x 7.5"
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin,
Ohio, Gift of Helen Hesse Charash

13a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004155-F
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

13b.

Eva Hesse, No Title, 1968
Gouache and ink, 15 x 11 1/2"
Private collection

14a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004189
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

14b.

Eva Hesse, No title, 1961
India ink on paper, 6 x 4 1/2"
Anonymous Gift to the Eva Hesse Archive

15a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004904
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

15b.

Eva Hesse, No title, 1961
Black and brown ink and watercolor on paper,
4 1/2 x 6", Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse

16a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004291
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

16b.

Eva Hesse, no title, 1969
Gouache, metallic gouache, pencil and ink on paper,
22 x 17", Collection of Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

17a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004900
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

17b.

Eva Hesse, no title, 1969
Metallic gouache, gouache, ink and pencil on paper,
22 x 17", Collection of Gioia Timpanelli

18a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004179
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

18b.

Eva Hesse, Untitled, 1969
metallic gouache, pencil and ink on paper, 23 x 17 3/8"
Collection Sondra Gilman

19a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004180
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

19b.

Eva Hesse, no title, c. 1963
Ink, watercolor, gouache and crayon, 25 x 26"
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin,
Ohio, Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982

20a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004168
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

20b.

Eva Hesse, No title (For Gioia), 1969
Private collection, Courtesy of The Estate of Eva Hesse

21a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004207
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

21b.

Eva Hesse, Untitled, 1963-64
Collage, gouache, watercolor, and black ink on paper,
22 x 30"
Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse and
Hauser & Wirth Gallery

22a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004811
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

22b.

Eva Hesse, Untitled, 1966
Ink wash and pencil on paper
Private collection, Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse
and Hauser & Wirth Gallery

23a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004452
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

23b.

Eva Hesse, Untitled, 1966
Ink and pencil on paper, 29.9 x 22.9 cm
Private collection, Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth Gallery

24a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004450
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

24b.

Eva Hesse, untitled, 1968
Ink, pencil, gouache, 15 1/2 x 11"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Englander, NY

25a.*

Charlotte Salomon, from "Life? Or Theatre?", M004925
Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

25b.

Eva Hesse with "Accession III", 1968
Courtesy of the Estate of Eva Hesse and
Hauser & Wirth Gallery

* "Life? or Theater?" series consists of 769 individual works painted between 1940-1942 in the south of France, while Salomon was in hiding from the Nazis.



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About ReflectSpace

ReflectSpace is an inclusive exhibition gallery designed to explore and reflect on major human atrocities, genocides, civil rights violations, and other social injustices. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is a hybrid space that is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology, and interactive media to reflect on the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogate current-day global human rights issues.

About Library Arts & Culture

Glendale's Library, Arts & Culture Department began in 1907 and includes six neighborhood libraries as well as the Brand Library & Art Center, housed in the historic 1904 mansion of Glendale pioneer Leslie C. Brand, and the Central Library, a 93,000 square foot center for studying, learning and gathering. For more information call Library, Arts & Culture at 818-548-2030 or see the website www.GlendaleLAC.org.

Debra Disman is a Los Angeles-based artist known for her work inspired by the book, which traverses tapestry, installation and sculpture to push familiar forms into works that arrest and baffle, while simultaneously offering places of contemplation and solace. Working both as a solo practitioner and in the public sphere of community engagement, she uses highly textural materiality, the “tactile textile”, as well as text (the “textural textile”) to invite altered ways of experiencing how we inhabit the world, as well as to instigate what we think we know and are.

“The evocative, visceral and physical quality of materials drives my work and gives it its emotional resonance and relevance vis a vis how they are used. I am compelled to layer, wrap, stitch, knot and glue as well as paint, draw and write, layering, disrupting and complicating the surface to add levels of meaning. Often, the meaning or intent becomes clear during or after this process, as if it had been there all along and simply surfaced during the act of making.”

Charlotte Salomon (April, 16 1917 – October, 10 1943) was a German-Jewish artist born in Berlin. She is primarily remembered as the creator of an autobiographical series of paintings “Leben? oder Theater?: Ein Singspiel” (Life? or Theater?: a song-play) consisting of 769 individual works painted between 1941 and 1943 in the south of France, while Salomon was in hiding from the Nazis. In October 1943, Salomon, 5 months pregnant at that time, was captured and deported to Auschwitz, where she was murdered by the Nazis soon after her arrival.

“Life? or Theater?” is not only a series of paintings—it includes a script in the form of words that themselves take the form of paintings, or are written into the paintings, or presented as overlays to images. It also has a “soundtrack” – music chosen by Salomon that augments and expands her stories. These range from Nazi marching songs to Schubert lieder and extracts from the music of Mozart and Mahler. The work is operatic in scale, highly modern in execution, unique in its form, and has an enduring power.

Eva Hesse (January 11, 1936 – May 29, 1970) was a German-Jewish-born American artist known for her pioneering work in materials such as latex, fiberglass, and plastics and reinvention of sculpture. One of the most influential artists of the 1960’s and a leading women artist working in sculpture, she continually pushed the limits of her creative ideas and practice.

She was born into a family of observant Jews in Hamburg. Desperate to escape the Nazis, her parents sent her and her sister to the Netherlands on one of the last Kindertransport trains. After almost six months of separation, the family miraculously reunited in England, and then emigrated to New York City in 1939.

Hesse’s work often shows minimal physical manipulation of material while simultaneously completely transforming the meaning it conveys. The critic Arthur Danto described her as “cop[ing] with emotional chaos by reinventing sculpture through aesthetic insubordination.”

Her death in 1970, at 34 years of age, due to a brain tumor was untimely. It cut short a career spanning a mere decade but one that would resonate for multiple future generations.

